

BROKEN WINGS

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Story by

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FADE IN

EXT. HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

Against a backdrop of towering Himalayan mountains, a small ski field sits carved into the side of a foothill. A swath of white snow surrounded on both sides by tall pine trees.

CUT TO BLACK:

Two people. Laboured breathing. Boots crunching across snow.

EXT. SKI FIELD - DAY

TWO YOUNG KIDS - one male, one female - trudge up a ski slope. Their warm breath trails behind them in clouds of vapor. Their winter clothes, primitive and patchy. The skis they carry on their shoulders made of rough-hewn wood.

Above them -- OTHER SKIERS, with modern ski equipment, ride the chair lift, staring down at them. Puzzled.

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPER: ELEVATION - 3,400M (11,155 FT.)

EXT. SKI FIELD - SUMMIT

The kids reach the top and are rewarded with a spectacular view. Giant snow covered peaks in every direction. A small town clings to the edges of a steep valley below. And before them -- a twisty, downhill ski run through the forest.

The children are, ADITI (7) - a confident little girl. Competitive and outspoken. If she has a goal, you better get out of her way. And ROHIT (7) - a sensitive but intense lad. Always searching, but never fulfilled.

ADITI

I'm going to beat you so bad you  
might as well not even race me.

Aditi smiles to herself. Rohit pushes off, down-slope.

ROHIT

Ready set go!

ADITI

Hey! I'm not ready!

Aditi adjusts her goggles and hurries after him.

LATER - ON SKI SLOPE

They rocket downhill. Aditi only 10 feet behind Rohit.

Into the turns -- they lean and slide.

Over snow humps -- they catch air.

For two young kids, they're damn good!

Aditi puzzles when Rohit slows and glides across the slope to the far side. Towards --

-- a WARNING SIGN. At the head of a side trail.

The sign reads: "DANGER! TRAIL CLOSED. DO NOT PROCEED."

Aditi catches up and stops beside Rohit.

ADITI

What are you doing?

Rohit nods at the trail.

ROHIT

Want to go down there?

ADITI

The sign says it's closed. And dangerous.

ROHIT

I know.

Rohit pushes off. Glides down the closed trail.

ADITI

Rohit! You're not allowed!

But he soon disappears past some trees. Out of sight.

Aditi throws her hands in the air -- and follows.

LATER - ON CLOSED TRAIL

When Aditi skis through the trees, she finds Rohit stopped on a rise, looking down. She joins him, shocked to see --

-- the trail slopes steeply down before them, like a ski jump. At the bottom, it's split by a crevasse, 20ft wide.

ROHIT

I bet you I can make it.

ADITI  
 Stop being stupid. We shouldn't be  
 here. Our dad's will kill us.

Rohit locks eyes with her.

ROHIT  
 Are you afraid?

The quiet intensity of his challenge makes her bristle.

ADITI  
 No.

Rohit pushes off -- down, towards the crevasse.

ADITI (CONT'D)  
 Rohit!

WHOOSH! He launches into the air -- across the crevasse --  
 -- but he's not going to make it!

ADITI (CONT'D)  
 ROHIT!!

CUT TO BLACK:

Someone's horrified GASP for air

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aditi sits up in bed. Eyes wide. Bathed in sweat. She darts a  
 glance around her room --

-- the room of a seven-year-old girl from a middle-class  
 Himalayan family. Simple wood furniture. Hand-sewn dolls. An  
 old desktop computer. A collage of old photos on the wall.

Many of the photos are of her and Rohit. Skiing.

She exhales. All is as it should be. Quiet and still. A pre-  
 dawn light coming through her window.

BATHROOM

She splashes water on her face. A voice calls to her --

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
 Aditi! Come eat your breakfast now.  
 They'll be here soon.

## BEDROOM

She tidies her bed, puts away her school books and takes a ski jacket off a chair. As she leaves, she darts a worried glance at the wall above her desk --

-- that collage of photos of her and Rohit at kiddie ski competitions over the years. Medals around their necks.

## HALLWAY

Aditi stands before a Christian altar, her hands together in prayer, and bows to a statue of Mary and the baby Jesus.

## LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN

Aditi sits with her PARENTS at a dining table eating breakfast faster than she should --

-- which brings the ire of her mother, MAMA SINGH (30) - wise, stubborn and fretful.

MAMA SINGH

(to Aditi)

Eat slowly, child. It's not a competition.

Aditi slows.

But PAPA SINGH (45) - honest, direct, competitive - points at her breakfast.

PAPA SINGH

You have a very important race today. Eat faster.

Aditi speeds up.

Mama gives Papa a withering look.

MAMA SINGH

What she should be getting ready for is a visit to my mother's.

PAPA SINGH

(to Aditi)

What would you rather do today? Visit your grandmother or ski?

Aditi gives Mama a cautious glance.

Mama grimaces. Papa smiles. He wins.

MAMA SINGH

And what about your math test tomorrow, young lady? Have you finished studying?

ADITI

Yes, Mama.

MAMA SINGH

Is that so.

(beat)

What's five times seven plus twelve?

Aditi keeps eating. One spoonful -- two spoonfuls --

ADITI

Forty seven.

Mama glances at Papa. He grins. 2-0 to Papa.

MAMA SINGH

I don't see what's so important about today. This is not an official race.

PAPA SINGH

But it is for money. In a way.

Mama raises an eyebrow.

PAPA SINGH (CONT'D)

After Rajiv blocked the vote to fund the ski program at the last school board meeting... I challenged him to a race.

MAMA SINGH

You did what?

PAPA SINGH

I told him if Aditi and Rohit beat his kids in the downhill, he has to vote for the program.

Mama considers this. Unsure whether to approve or not.

PAPA SINGH (CONT'D)

How else can we afford Aditi's training?

She glances between Papa and Aditi.

MAMA SINGH  
OK. Kick their butts, then.

PAPA SINGH  
Mama! Such language.

Papa winks at Aditi. She giggles.

KNOCK KNOCK. Someone's at the front door.

PAPA SINGH (CONT'D)  
(to Aditi)  
Grab your gear. It's time to go.

Father and daughter get ready. Mama clears the table. On a wall in the background -- we see a collection of skiing pictures of Papa. A shelf full of trophies and medals. A clipping from a newspaper. The article's photo shows Papa in a hospital bed. His leg in a cast. The headline reads:

"LOCAL SKI CHAMPION FORCED TO RETIRE."

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Papa opens the door. Rohit stands there, wooden skis over his shoulder, smiling. Next to him, his dad, MR. THAKUR (55) - a good-natured, older father bent by years of hard work.

Their simple Himalayan winter clothes reveal they're even poorer than Aditi's family.

Mr. Thakur waves through the door at Mama Singh.

MR. THAKUR  
Morning!

PAPA SINGH  
(to Rohit and Aditi)  
You two ready to win today?

ADITI  
I am. Not sure about slow poke.

Aditi bumps Rohit's shoulder playfully on her way out.

ROHIT  
I'm faster than you are.

ADITI  
Are not.

She pokes her tongue out then runs. Giggling. Rohit chases.